

TESTIMONY in SUPPORT of the following 6 BILLS:**SUPPORT - EARLY VOTING IMPLEMENTATION****HB 5004:** AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING**SB 1064:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY VOTING**SB 1057:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND EARLY VOTING**SUPPORT - APPROVAL OF NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING****HJ 1:** RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**SJ 29:** RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**HB 6693:** AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING

February 22, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Flexer and Rep. Blumenthal, Vice-Chairs Sen. Slap and Rep. Morin-Bello, Ranking Members Sen. Sampson and Rep. Mastrofrancesco, and Distinguished Members of the GAE Committee,

My name is Paula Bacolini, I have lived in Glastonbury, CT for over 35 years. I am the founder and leader of Make Voting Easy-CT, a grassroots organization with nearly 1,000 members from 95 cities and towns across CT, who are devoted to making voting more convenient and accessible.

Thank you for all the years of service you have given to help pass voting reform legislation, which allowed your constituents to vote on a referendum to allow Early In-Person Voting in CT. It passed in 2022, with a 60% majority. CT is now poised to become the 47th state to allow Early In-Person Voting.

SUPPORT - EARLY VOTING IMPLEMENTATION:

As you work to implement Early In-Person Voting, I am testifying again in **SUPPORT** of these three bills:

HB 5004: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING**SB 1064:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY VOTING**SB 1057:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND EARLY VOTING

We are calling on you to please provide:

- 1-the funding necessary for Early In-Person Voting implementation - in the primaries, general and special elections, and referendums in 2023, 2024 and beyond
- 2-at least 2 weeks (14 days including weekends and week days)
- 3-Two weekends - Saturdays and Sundays
- 4-early morning hours: 6am-10am, and late evening hours: 5pm-9pm
- 5-a minimum number of polling places for each municipality based on population, age of voters and access to transportation to at least one polling place per municipality
- 6-assure increased access to larger towns and cities

Early In-Person Voting is particularly beneficial to families and your constituents of all ages. An otherwise healthy individual or their family member may be taken ill on or just before Election Day, and the voter would miss the opportunity to vote. Early Voting affords more flexibility for families, and especially for women who are caring for children, elder adult relatives, and their

own families. As a senior citizen with my own personal health problems, I would really appreciate the ability to vote on a day when the weather is good, and to have the option to vote early, and avoid long lines at the polls.

SUPPORT - APPROVAL OF NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

We again want to thank you for passing No-Excuse Absentee Voting legislation in 2021, which would allow your constituents to vote on a referendum to allow no-excuse absentee voting in CT. Although it had bipartisan support, it will, like Early Voting, need to be voted on again this session with a new legislative body to bring a referendum to the voters. I am again testifying in **SUPPORT** of these 3 bills:

HJ 1: RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

SJ 29: RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

HB 6693: AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING

We experienced first hand how easy and convenient it was to vote in 2020 with an absentee ballot, and to be able to either mail or securely drop off our absentee ballots in the Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes outside of our Town/City Halls. We applaud you and the CT General Assembly for making this possible. Although these reforms were instituted and supported by a bipartisan supermajority of the CT House and Senate during the Summer Special Legislative Sessions in 2020, they were not permanent. 35% or 650,000 CT voters took this option and voted in 2020 by absentee ballots, and less than 1% of the ballots were rejected, the lowest in recent history. It was convenient and secure.

Your constituents want a choice. Please allow them to vote on a referendum to amend the state constitution to allow no-excuse absentee ballot voting. It is time to change our CT constitution and make voting more accessible and easier for all eligible voters. As a senior, I greatly appreciated the opportunity to vote by absentee ballot without restrictions, and to use the ballot drop boxes provided in my town.

According to the National Conference of State Legislators 35 states and D.C. provide no-excuse absentee voting, which includes eight states that mail ballots to all eligible voters. In these 8 states, voters do not need to request an absentee ballot and receive one automatically. It is time for CT to offer their eligible voters the opportunity to choose to vote by absentee ballot without an excuse.

In addition, we support **HB 6693: AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING**, which will allow for curing absentee ballots by notifying voters who's ballots may be rejected due to a defect that the voter may correct in person, allow ballot counters to receive absentee ballots by or before 6pm on election day, provide pre-paid postage to return absentee ballots, and to make signed absentee ballots public record. This will improve the absentee ballot process.

We are urging you to please vote these bills out of the GAE Committee quickly so that they can be debated in the CT House and Senate early in this 2023 session. Again, we are very grateful for the opportunity to provide verbal testimony via zoom at the GAE Public Hearing and appreciate your work in making this possible in the past and also in the future.

Thank you for your consideration,

Paula Bacolini

Founder and Leader, Make Voting Easy-CT (VotingRightsCT@gmail.com)